

Amendments to the Claims:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claim in the application.

Claims 1-11 (canceled)

Claim 12. (Previously Presented) A surgical ink dispensing instrument for facilitating surgical tattooing of a patient, which comprises:

an ink cartridge defining an enclosed internal chamber and having a port in communication with said internal chamber; and

sterile tattoo ink disposed within said enclosed internal chamber of said ink cartridge; and

a surgical needle ~~mounted~~ defining a lumen in communication with said port of said ink cartridge, said needle including an internal thread for cooperatively engaging said ink cartridge adjacent said port to couple said surgical needle to said ink cartridge.

wherein said ink cartridge is substantially flexible to permit the operator to manually deform said ink cartridge by direct engagement of said ink cartridge with a hand of the operator to dispense said tattoo ink through said port.

Claim 13. (Cancel)

Claim 14. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument according to claim 24 including an enclosure for covering said port of said ink cartridge in the absence of said surgical needle.

Claim 15. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument according to claim 14 wherein said enclosure is releasably mounted to said ink cartridge.

Claim 16. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument according to claim 15 wherein said enclosure is an end cap, said end cap being removably mounted to said ink cartridge adjacent said port.

Claims 17-22. (canceled)

Claim 23. (Previously Presented) A surgical ink dispensing instrument for facilitating surgical tattooing of a patient, which comprises:

an ink cartridge defining an enclosed internal chamber and having a port in communication with said internal chamber; and

an end cap for covering said port of said ink cartridge sterile and being releasably mounted to said ink cartridge; and

sterile tattoo ink disposed within said enclosed internal chamber of said ink cartridge;

wherein said ink cartridge is substantially flexible to permit the operator to manually deform said ink cartridge by direct engagement of said ink cartridge with a hand of the operator to dispense said tattoo ink through said port.

Claim 24. (Currently Amended) The surgical instrument according to claim ~~13~~ 12 wherein said surgical needle is releasably mountable to said ink cartridge adjacent said port.

Claim 25. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument according to claim 23 including a surgical needle releasably mountable to said ink cartridge adjacent said port in the absence of said end cap.

Claim 26. (Currently Amended) ~~A surgical~~ An ink dispensing instrument for facilitating ~~surgical~~ tattooing of a patient, which comprises:

an ink cartridge defining an enclosed internal chamber and having a port in communication with said internal chamber; and

sterile tattoo ink disposed within said enclosed internal chamber of said ink cartridge; and

a member ~~releasably~~ mounted to said ink cartridge adjacent said port;

means associated with said ink cartridge and said member for releasably coupling said member to said ink cartridge adjacent said port;

wherein said ink cartridge is substantially flexible to permit the operator to manually deform said ink cartridge by direct engagement of said ink cartridge with a hand of the operator to dispense said tattoo ink through said port.

Claim 27. (Currently Amended) The ~~surgical~~ instrument according to claim 26 wherein said member is a surgical needle.

Claim 28. (Currently Amended) The ~~surgical~~ instrument according to claim 26 wherein said member is an enclosure.